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Teacher (2002) Storge, J.H., ASCD, WA USA

### Effective Teaching: A Summary

Based on the assumption that elements from all the categories identified in this book must be combined to achieve teaching effectiveness, the research results included in this text might be summarized under three overarching statements describing the effective teacher:

- The effective teacher recognizes complexity.
- The effective teacher communicates clearly.
- The effective teacher serves conscientiously.

### Recognizing Complexity

Teaching is an extraordinarily complex undertaking. To illustrate, just think about how we teach a child to read or an older student to understand algebraic equations. In either case, teaching—at least successful teaching—is the process of teaching complex disciplines and processes to complex pupils. Teaching is the ability to transfer knowledge so that the learners acquire—even own—the knowledge and skills for themselves.

To succeed, the effective teacher must have sufficient knowledge of content, of pedagogy of context, and of students to appreciate the intricacies that are bound up in the teaching-and-learning process. This deep understanding of complexity can help prevent the teacher from trivializing content and underestimating the work it takes to prepare lessons. An understanding of complexity is also reflected in the effort it takes to implement the lessons with students.

The effective teacher also recognizes each student as a unique individual, understanding that each one brings her own set of experiences and perspectives to the classroom. Moreover, the effective teacher recognizes that a class is a dynamic and multifaceted entity made up of a myriad of personalities, with a personality all its own.

All these understandings contribute to a teacher's interactions with students, plans and practices for managing the environment, and preparation and differentiation for student learning needs. In a word, the effective teacher understands and can successfully navigate complexity.

Recognizing and understanding for a teacher is like getting into the driver's seat of a 5-speed, stick-shift automobile. The ineffective driver manages to get the car in gear, but cuts the engine off at every stop sign. The effective driver, like the effective teacher, adeptly and simultaneously handles multiple tasks and multiple meanings without losing sight of the goal of moving toward a specific destination.

### Communicating Clearly

Communication is a key to success in any profession that requires interaction among people and within an organization. The teacher's job requires clear articulation of expectations, encouragement, and caring, as well as content knowledge. Moreover, the communication of content in teaching is far more than just talking about objectives.

Effective communication in teaching requires that a teacher have a clear understanding of the subject matter and of how to share that material with students in a way that they come to own and understand it deeply. Beyond directly teaching content knowledge and skills, effective teachers also must be adept at facilitating students' own search for knowledge.

The teacher's affective characteristics are often a primary concern to the students. Therefore, the teacher must constantly communicate a climate of support and encouragement to ensure that students are engaged in the two-way teaching and learning process. Furthermore, effective management and student learning are clearly related to communication of expectations. Ultimately, being an effective communicator is about repackaging and delivering a message so that someone can receive, respond, adapt, and use the information successfully.

### Serving Conscientiously

A final overarching construct that emerges from the review of effective teaching research is the teacher's willingness to dedicate time and energy to the profession. Working hard is important, but even better is working both hard and smart.

The effective teacher is concerned with his own continuous learning process and reflects on all the elements of performance in an effort to continuously improve. The effective teacher cares about students, and ensures that students recognize this caring and feel supported and encouraged. He cares about the classroom and strives to ensure an organized and positive learning environment. The importance of conscientious reflection and involvement in all aspects of teaching cannot be overemphasized in defining the effective teacher.

### Improving Teacher Effectiveness

So where do we go from here? To improve teacher effectiveness, we need to consider all aspects of the profession—from preservice and inservice training to recruitment and